(c) and (d) Yes Sir, In December, 2006 the Government signed an MoU with United Arab Emirates and in April, 2007 with Kuwait. The Ministry has finalized an additional protocol with Qatar to update the 1985 agreement. MoU with Malaysia has been initialed.

(e) The MoU provide for a Joint Working Group to meet twice a year to discuss bilateral issues. This mechanism will be used to enforce the provisions of the MoU.

Contribution to citizen welfare fund

1294. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian immigrants who visit Gulf countries for work are contributing certain amount towards the India citizen welfare fund;

(b) if so, whether the said fund is utilized to repatriate stranded destitute Indians back to their native places and also for chemical embalming of the dead bodies and to handover them to their families;

(c) if so, the details pertaining to total fund collected during the last three years, year-wise; and

(d) the total expenditure incurred and the number of immigrants from Andhra Pradesh provided assistance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (d) The requisite information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Backward region development fund

1295. SHRI B.J.PANDA:
MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have launched a Rs. 3,750 crore Backward Region Development Fund aimed at removing regional imbalance in development and making the rural poor self reliant;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the districts where this scheme is proposed to be launched in Orissa indicating the details of funds that are proposed to be provided to Orissa for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) The Backward Regions Grant Fund programme (BRGF) was launched in 2006-07. The Programme has three components, namely Special Plan for Bihar, Special Plan for the KBK districts of Orissa and the district component covered by the Backward Districts Initiative of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY)